2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

west but on the same side of the road is Vasilika's cemetery. It is a small square area outlined by tall cypresses standing just inside the low stone wall which encloses the graves and the small church of St. Nicholas. Mass is said in this church in celebration of the birthday of its patron saint on December 6th. Sunday afternoon Easter services and funeral ceremonies are also held there.

Past the cemetery the road turns east, runs through the village, and constitutes its main street. Almost all the buildings of Vasilika are ranged for about one-fifth of a mile on both sides of this dirt road. Most of the houses are on the ridge side of the road; a single row of structures lines the field side. As one continues east on the village street and looks to the right on the field side of the road, he first sees fields and then the old school building. The next structure is the main church of the village, the church of St. Athanasius. It is the largest building in the settlement, and, like most of the others, it is constructed of field stone. Regular Sunday masses, Christmas and Easter services, baptisms, weddings, as well as the majority of saint's day and other special liturgies are conducted here by the village priest. The bell in the campanile of St. Athanasius summons the villagers to church, the children to school, and the men to an impromptu public meeting on the rare occasions when one is called to discuss village affairs. And, inevitably, the tolling of the bell announces the death of one of the villagers.

Separated from St. Athanasius by a very narrow alley stands a one-room structure which serves as the office for the village government. It now has a telephone, the only one in the village. Near the village headquarters and still on the field side of the road lives the owner of a combined store and coffeehouse. A ground-floor room of his house contains merchandise such as matches, cigarettes, lemons, salt, sugar, canned vegetables and fish, aspirin and penicillin, thread, and miscellaneous small items, while the outside space in front of the store is reserved for chairs and tables. From this coffeehouse, on the field side of the village, the rest of the structures are homes and their outbuildings, roughly in a line near the road.

Starting now at the western end of the village, and looking east at the ridge side of the road, one sees houses and their outbuildings occupying the lower third of the ridge. The uppermost group of homes were, in 1955, reed huts in which some of the shepherd families lived. Other reed huts served as storage houses. By 1961, the dwelling-huts had all been replaced by new brick houses, already wired for electricity but otherwise in various stages of completion. On the ridge side of the road the only buildings which are not exclusively used as residences are, first, another combined store and coffeehouse, which stands on the street diagonally opposite the first and is also a room in the house of its owner, and second, a nearly completed stone reservoir.

Finally, some two hundred feet past the last house and slightly up the slope, stands the small church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, the patron saints of the village. Here the village celebrates its *paniyiri*, its patron saints' day festival, on the first of July. Mass is celebrated in the morning, and villagers from the surrounding countryside fill the small edifice to overflowing. Occasionally, other masses are said at this church in the course of the year. Except for the

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342 ushered into the *saloni* and are expected to remain there. At name day celebra-
511 tions, at the *paniyiri*, at Christmas, at engagement and wedding parties, guests
574 are greeted in the *saloni* and may be served food there. Most of the time it is an
594 uninhabited room, but because it represents the family to the world outside and
[356] because the patterns of hospitality in the village often require a family to entertain without advance notice, its furnishings are the best in the house and the room is always kept clean and in good order.

352 A typical *saloni* in Vasilika has a large square table placed in the center
511 of the room. The table-top is covered with an ornamental cloth, often snowy
[215] white. A glass bowl commonly occupies the center of the table. It is often filled
[353] with slightly yellowed photographs of members of the family and relatives living away from the village, and with the most recently received postcards or greeting cards.

[583] Virtually every *saloni* contains one or two large trousseau trunks placed along the wall. Their tops are usually covered with an ornamental white cloth. These trunks serve as storage places for bed linens, table linens, extra sheets, pillow cases, and table covers, which were part of the wife's trousseau. They also are repositories for the trousseau being prepared for the daughters of the house. No matter how low the income level of the family, there are always at
[574] least some token *rukha* (linens) as dowry. Again, regardless of income, every housewife serves her guests fruit preserves in small crystal dishes and the liqueur which accompanies the preserves in tiny crystal glasses, and proffers both items on a tray.

[574] A *saloni* may contain no other furnishings, but often the one bedstead owned by the family remains there to be used only by guests. If the family owns a wardrobe they may display it in the *saloni* and store their best clothes in it.

215 Wedding photographs of the husband and wife of the household, and of
353 their parents or their married children are hung on the walls of the *saloni*. Ad-
511 ditional framed photographs of relatives who no longer live in the village also decorate the walls. Often a large framed mirror hangs on the same wall as the photographs.

207 Approximately ten of Vasilika's families had battery-operated table radios
511 in the *saloni* in 1955. Since the electrification of the village, additional families
[264] have purchased radios on the installment plan. By 1961 it had become customary
[365] to turn on Greek folk music programs during the midday meal and in the evenings. Since 1958 several families have purchased elaborate chandelier-like fixtures, holding two or three electric bulbs. These are placed above the center
[354] table of the *saloni*.

342 The terrace of the two-story house has a variety of uses. Here the family
511 may perform some simple household task. The women may hang their wash on
[296] wires stretched along the poles which support a sheltering roof. Here, too, they
[513] may set the table for the Easter feast. The entire family may sleep out on the terrace in the heat of summer. Whatever else the terrace is used for, however, its edge is always lined with plants of various kinds, potted in whitewashed gallon
247 tin cans. Some are flowering plants, but many are herbs, especially basil, which
511 the women use in cooking. The villagers, men and women alike, are passionately
[263]

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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[Villages of the Plains]

lished by 1952. Through their instrumentality a series of important changes have come to the agriculture of the village. Fertilizer, bought through the cooperatives, has played its usual role in increasing wheat yields. In addition, a new variety of wheat has been introduced by the agricultural extension agent; this has still further increased the harvest, so that in 1956 the farmers counted on between 200 and 300 okes of wheat per stremma, compared with their prewar expectation of 80 to 100. The co-ops also have been able to buy two tractors and two harvesting machines that cultivate all the crop land of the community. These machines are hired out to neighboring villages when not needed in Old Corinth, and bring in a fair sum of money.

The most significant step, however, has been the drilling of irrigation wells. Irrigation began on a modest scale before the war, but in 1947 fuel for the pumping engines was hard to come by and many of the thirty wells the village then possessed were not used fully. By 1956 the number of wells and pumps had increased to 163, and all were in full use. Most of the suitable land in the village has come under irrigation. On this land, the villagers raise garden vegetables, especially tomatoes, and despatch them daily to the Athens market by truck. The result, in terms of money income, is spectacular. I was assured that a farm now yields ten times the income it supplied before the war.

Old Corinth has also benefited from the revival of tourism. In 1955, some 72,000 tourists visited the archaeological museum and the ruins on the outskirts of the village; and most of these visitors left at least some small change behind them in one of the coffee houses or in the new tourist restaurant which the government constructed in 1955. Moreover, Old Corinth lies near the new electric power line. Electricity came to the village for the first time in 1956. Of all the changes benefiting them in

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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recent years, this was the one the villagers most praised, perhaps because it was the newest.

Very considerable inequalities in landholding exist within the village. As a result, some families have profited far more than others from the new prosperity. Since the Greek War of Independence (1821–30), if not before, landholdings in Old Corinth have not been disturbed by wholesale government action, of the sort characteristic in the northern part of the country. The processes of inheritance and marriage settlements, supplemented by purchase and sale of land – something almost unheard of in the northern villages – have resulted in the establishment of extremely complicated property relationships. Renting and sharecropping are both common. In addition, many fields are subject to concurrent rights held by several individuals. This situation arises when heirs have refrained from subdividing an inheritance because such division would reduce the fields to absurdly small dimensions. Instead it has long been the custom to cultivate such fields as a unit and to divide the proceeds, according to some agreed proportion, among all those who have a claim thereto. Over the generations, such concurrent rights have sometimes ramified widely; but the complications of remote family and property relationships are something Greek peasant farmers are able to keep very clear in their heads, with or without written documents.

A substantial proportion of the inhabitants of Old Corinth possess no land at all. They make a living by working for others, either for day wages or on a sharecropping basis. With the introduction of tomatoes and other vegetable crops, together with the revival of the currant market, a definite, though seasonal, shortage of labor has appeared. Substantial farmers (that is, men owning 10 to 20 acres of land) complained of not being able to find enough hands to help them cultivate their fields, even though the wages they paid in the currant fields were

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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621 631 178 a distinguished man in any company. Authority seemed to rest as naturally upon his shoulders as the callouses rested upon his palms. This easy relation between village officers and the people of their community had definitely not been characteristic in 1947.

621 631 652 Local government in Greece was suffering, however, from a chronic and serious handicap. Local authorities lacked funds, and could seldom do anything beyond routine administration without borrowing from some agency of the central government. [1] The result of this situation was to extend greatly the real authority and influence of the central government over local affairs. Village and municipal authorities spent a great deal of time waiting in the anterooms of officials of the central government in the hope of securing money with which to carry through some local improvement.

621 651 652 178 631 Villages had always depended on the Agricultural Bank or on one of the central ministries for finding money for any important project; cities and towns until 1949 had financed their local expenditures mainly through excise duties imposed upon goods brought into the municipality. Before that year, long lines of peasant carts, waiting their turn at municipal excise stations, were a frequent sight in the outskirts of every town. Internal tariffs were abolished in 1949, however, and the share of the cigarette tax, levied nationally, which was assigned to municipalities in lieu of these excises proved generally inadequate. Town governments were therefore in poor shape financially, and any public improvements that were made came from special grants or loans from the central government.

633 365 1. The municipality of Athens, for example, had been insolvent for as long as anyone cared to recall. The problem was such that in 1955 and again in 1956, the Athens Power Company threatened to cut off the supply of electricity to municipal institutions unless some of the back bills were paid.

178 out the mote to which the peasant's eye has become accustomed, and even has to take in consideration the fact that the eye is actually adjusted to the mote, and that its removal would mean at least temporary disruption.

[157] There is another side to the picture with respect to coping. Greeks are tenacious and resourceful in making the best of what they do have. A visitor reports that a gasoline tank that sprang a leak on the road was repaired with *loukoums*, the sticky Near Eastern candy; she reports having seen two men pushing freight cars along a railroad track, as the engine had been destroyed in the guerilla warfare. This attitude can be harnessed productively, and with benefit for people who derive a sense of enjoyment and achievement from it.

178 829 [195] The sanction of the Church in inaugurating any change is essential; and so too, is that of the past, in endorsing practice, as well as a precedent for the introduction of change. It is well to remember that Byzantium and its civilization was part of the Greek past; and to remember that Rome was not. The Romans were barbarians; the [854] manual on child care which urges mothers to suckle their babies like Penelope and the Trojan Hecuba, also urges them to give up the custom of swaddling the child's limbs, a barbarous and tyrannical custom practised by the ancient Romans. The past is mentioned in learned articles, in newspapers, in letters, in the oratorical conversation. It is part of the festive dressing of the naked statement.

177 178 507 The areas of vulnerability of the Greek *philotimo* must be remembered in all suggestions of change, as well as the pattern of relationships within which dependency is good and taken for granted. Greeks are ready to be treated as sons or nephews or younger brothers, within the balanced system of interdependency, and the United States Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), which has been giving welcome aid to Greece, just now is often spoken of as Uncle Truman, after the President of the United States; but it would be an insult to treat them as poor relations who are dependent through personal failure. Again, to be treated mechanistically, impersonally, is offensive; there is resentment at the fact that some of the foreign experts stay at hotels catering to foreigners, associate only with Greeks who follow foreign ways, and treat the rest of the people like figures on a chart.

178 It is necessary to bear in mind that the Greeks have a deep attachment to their way of life, however much in need of change it may be in terms of more recent scientific and economic developments. There [312] [365] are reports that in the provinces people who can afford to pipe water to their houses will not do so because they do not want to deprive their women of the social visit at the fountain, and of the walk back and forth. There are communities that decide not to have electricity, not to buiid a hotel to accomodate the tourists who are attracted by the beauty of the place, so that they can retain the ways they like, time-consuming as they are.